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VOL. I.—No. 24. MANCHESTER, Saturday, January 2, 1869. Price One Penny.

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THACKERAY AS AN ARTIST.

NOVELISTS are not always fortunate in their choice of artists to illustrate their stories. But, indeed, although we have many draughtsmen superlatively gifted, it would be difficult to find one amongst them with powers varied enough to illustrate a story thoroughly. A great novelist is not likely, however, to trouble himself much about the capabilities of his illustrator, feeling that his own peculiar gift, helped by his reader's imagination, are all that is needful for the realisation of the characters, incidents, and localities of his tales. We are not surprised, therefore, at Dickens beginning his *Pickwick Papers* in company with an inferior caricaturist, such as Seymour; and, Seymour having shot himself, taking up with Hablot K. Browne instead, and going on, apparently quite contented, with him ever since. Nevertheless, seeing that Dickens's books are illustrated, we would rather the etchings had been by an abler hand. *Oliver Twist*, of all his novels, is the only one that has had justice done to it. In it we have the rare pleasure of seeing two men of genius, Cruikshank and Dickens, working hand-in-hand. Boz deserves a better artist than Phiz. It is oftenest so. But sometimes the arrangement is reversed; and we have a great artist working for an inferior author—Cruikshank, for instance, in company with Harrison Ainsworth, illustrating his *Jack Sheppard* for him. Lucky Ainsworth! Cruikshank's genius will carry your questionable novel into the year 2000 for you, or farther.

Now and then we find artists accompanying themselves with the pen, but we rarely hear of authors attempting to realise their conceptions with the pencil; and, setting aside the supposed feeling of the great ones in the matter, is it desirable they should do so? Undoubtedly it is—when they can; for, as the inventive author sees his characters completely and harmoniously, he will, of course, if he can draw what he sees, draw them truer than anyone else. So, though we are always in doubt, when we take up *Philip*, whether Mr. Walker's Tufton Hunt or the little sister be really Thackeray's, we have none whatever that Jeames, Costigan, and Major Pendennis are faithful portraits of the individuals themselves. Just consider what it would be worth to us to have Scott's idea of Dominie Sampson or Baillie Nicol Jarvie drawn for us by Scott's own hand. As it is, no artist has yet realised the Dominie. Leslie's is the nearest approach to the truth, but even he is a long way off. Thackeray is the only instance where the two gifts—literary and artistic—have, in a high degree, been combined. He could and did realise with the pencil, and etching-point, to a considerable extent. His Peggy O'Dowd and Pitt Crawley's are here; and, although his drawing is occasionally poor, we may well excuse—no, not excuse—care nothing for all shortcomings, except the most glaring.

Thomas Hood could draw, and he cracked many a joke and made may a pun with his pencil; but, clever though most of his illustrations are, and valuable as the graphic thoughts of a unique genius, he never appeared to care for, or to have any appreciation of the graceful or beautiful. You find nothing in him beyond the funny, or broadly humorous, and such a preponderance of the ugly withal that his cuts disfigure most of the pages where they occur. We often wish they had been consigned to some limbo of an appendix. They sadly need a touch of grace to redeem them from the grossness which, undoubtedly, is too abundant. Out of the hundreds he drew, the only one we can ever call to mind with pleasure is, that of his maid announcing Mr. Grimaldi. The expression of her face—so full of surprise, and delight at the remembrance of Joe's wonderful grimaces—is really fine.

The little Christmas book, *Mrs. Perkins's Ball*, is the only instance we have of Thackeray the artist accompanying Thackeray the author with the pen. Mr. and Mrs. Perkins and guests are all drawn with great care and vigour, and are so full of individual character that, in their way, as satirical sketches, they have never been beaten. Greatly preferable, however, is Thackeray the author, pencil in hand, though with it he hadn't power sufficient to give those fine distinctions of individual character in either his beautiful young women or handsome young men, unequalled though he was—at least in modern times—in pourtraying delicate shades of difference in them with his pen. In the illustrations, his Pendennis, George Osborne, and Mr. Beaumons are all too much like one another; his Amelia, Laura, and Miss Amory are failures; and no wonder, for to give beauty, and marked individuality along with it, requires not only great artistic gifts, but considerable practice as well. Nothing short of a Leslie or Millais will satisfy in that particular. Thackeray couldn't draw Amelia; his Glorvina is better—is good. The illustrations to *The Great Hoggarty Diamond* are unworthy of him; they do not assist the story in the slightest. Those to *Dr. Birch and his young Friends* are very much better; but it is in his great works, such as *Vanity Fair*, that we are most anxious to see what he has accomplished. We don't so much care what Miss Bunion or the Mulligan was like; but would much like to see the effigies of Becky Sharpe or Dobbin drawn by the man who first conceived them.

There can be no doubt that Thackeray had clear pictures of all his characters—his Amelia, Mrs. O'Dowd, and the rest—in his mind, but he couldn't always draw thoroughly what he saw so distinctly. He couldn't even retain the features of some of his principal figures through a succession of illustrations. In this he was far below such a draughtsman as Phiz. But in his writings the characters are so nicely shaded; the markings so slight; shortcomings and little weaknesses hinted at so faintly, they are like real individuals, and as difficult to draw to our satisfaction as are the portraits of our most intimate friends. Rawdon Crawley never in the etchings or woodcuts shews the same features twice, and in Becky he has failed utterly, excepting as a girl, mimicking Miss Pinkerton and Jemima with her dolls. But in Becky's case this is not surprising, for who on earth could draw a perfectly satisfactory portrait of that remarkable young woman? To do so would require all the nice discrimination of a Leslie—a great favourite of ours the reader perceives—and something over and above. A pretty, (so we are told, but it is barely credible,) fascinating, heartless creature, with green eyes—a mixture of hazel and grey—full of fun and brilliancy when under excitement; filled with coldness and hate when not. A bad forehead; thin lips; upper lip long, denoting strength of character; a brilliant complexion; lithe limbs; beautiful hands and feet. We have all the features, but to put them together defies us; and Thackeray, without colour, without light and shade even, with nothing but the etching-point, tried—and failed. His realization doesn't in the least help us to a glimpse of the real Becky. George Osborne, the selfish dandy, but with a sense of honour in him, is pretty well; his qualities were negative, mostly, and are negatively expressed. He was merely what school-girls would call a handsome young man, with Oh!

such whiskers! A barber's dummy in fact, and as such Thackeray has drawn him. The elder Osborne is the best drawn character in the book: Thackeray has realised him to perfection. So he has the great Miss Barbara Pinkerton in the act of composing her note to Miss Sedley's parents. Every reader should feel thankful to Thackeray for such a careful rendering of that important lady. The portraits of old Sir Pitt Crawley are mostly bad: but look at him on his knees proposing to Becky. There you have him to the life. Becky in the same cut is not recognisable. The young Dobbin (Figs) under the tree in the playground, absorbed in *The Arabian Nights*, is remarkably fine. The large-jointed, slovenly schoolboy, rapidly outgrowing his jacket and knee-patched trousers, is given with rare fidelity. Jos Sedley, a fat buck in Hessian boots, is a failure: the fat that is on him is not the fat of a young man.

In his minor characters Thackeray is almost invariably successful. The supercilious, sniggering Jones, for instance, reading *Vanity Fair* at his club: how realistic it makes the whole affair until you almost believe in it as a matter of fact. Miss Jemima, too, is fine; so is Sambo, the black footman. Miss Swartz turning round on the music-stool is a perfect portrait, full of good-nature and thick-lipped animation. George Osborne's man, Trotter, is a faithful portrait, as any one may see at a glance. Lord Steyne is good and well rendered wherever he appears. The sheriff-officer's men and young Jew doorkeepers of the sponging house are true to the life. The German student at Becky's bedroom door at the "Elephant" is hideously ugly and truthful. But pleasanter to look upon is Mr. Chopper setting off to dine with Captain Dobbin: his careful wife turning him out, as bright as possible, without a speck, to the great admiration of herself and children, and he, beaming with delight, putting the finishing touches to his toilet by drawing on a pair of white cotton gloves, promising his wife not to punish Captain D.'s port too severely. How different in spirit from the German student.

Thackeray etched with the hand of a master. His handling was always firm; no scratchings anywhere; no scrawling either, or catching at effect. Every line with him means something, not in his etchings alone, but in everything he drew. He was unequal, as who is not; but of all his full-page illustrations we only remember one that is positively bad, namely, the scene at Vauxhall in *Vanity Fair*. The drawing of George Osborne's legs so disproportionate to the body—mere sticks—is so puerile that it disfigures the book. The only good bit in the picture is the drunken man intended for Jos. In the *Virginians* some of the etchings are full of grace, and excellent as compositions. One, "The Welcome," Harry Warrington succoured by the Lambert family, is particularly fine. Another, "Sir George, My Lady and their Master," is equally so. Next to *Vanity Fair* we rank the illustrations to the *Virginians*. *Pendennis* is not nearly so thoughtfully or carefully done. Whilst engaged on it he probably felt the double work—writing and drawing—too much for him, and so thrust the least important somewhat aside.

But of all his pictorial work his initial letters, to our thinking, are the best. They are his texts. Many of them gems, in their way, of fancy, simplicity, drollery, or grotesque humour. Some of his happiest thoughts are rounded off in these little things, and not only has he used his own stores unsparingly, but everything available in Shakespere, Heraldry, History, Classical Literature, Nursery Tales, Fables, Proverbs, and the Scriptures is pressed into service, yet always in combination with something from his own fancy,—some quaint twist given, or sparkling ornament added, to the reading. The bare enumeration of them would fill considerable space: we must content ourselves with naming only a few. The good Samaritan, sirens, mermaids, a cat looking at a king, the three witches in *Macbeth*, Pyramus and Thisbe, the sower, Shylock whetting his knife, Othello smothering his wife, and three especial favourites of ours—Becky sitting on the loop of the letter P angling for a thick-set, deep-bellied carp (Jos of course); the same lady in a cocked hat as Napoleon at St. Helena; and Jos as Falstaff with Mrs. Rawdon Crawley as Mrs. Page. The thought in these little things is always ahead of the artistic element, though that is generally far above the average. Instances of the two great gifts—the literary and artistic—united in one person are never likely to be other than rare. Thackeray was largely endowed with both. His etchings and wood blocks are therefore of peculiar value. They ought to be highly prized, and will be more and more so as he himself is farther removed from us.

LONDON.

IT may, at first sight, appear somewhat presumptuous to propose to polish off the metropolis of the world in some few columns; and if we intended to publish an exhaustive treatise on the subject, our presumption might not appear any less at second sight. But, in point of fact, we only purpose mentioning three matters which seem to us to be the distinctive features of London, and to correct a few errors which are current in popular opinion on the matter, by the way.

London is common to all England, and in any town in England is as much a local topic as the election of the local beadle or the condition of the parish pump. We all of us have to go up to London at some time or other in our lives. Men have to go up on business; women have to go up on pleasure; girls have to go up to get finished—and finished they get, with a vengeance—and boys have to go up to get experienced in the ways of the world. The place has a fascination. Before one goes to it, one likes to hear about it; after one has been to it, one likes to talk about it. We get educated into a sort of superstitious awe of it; the sight of its vastness, and business, and grandeur, and wealth increase it; and we return to our provincial homes impressed more deeply than ever with a species of reverence for it—to educate the next generation into the same. To maintain that this reverence is a mockery, a delusion, and a snare, is the first of the three objects which we have proposed to ourselves.

Flying visits do not suffice to give one an idea of London. We may get a notion of its size, its wealth, its traffic, and its sights, from casual visits; but to begin to understand its character, one must live in it. A glamour hangs about the place for months. For months everything is a mirage. One looks around one through the spectacles of awe. When first one feels that one is really left alone in it, the immensity of it strikes the mind so painfully that the sense of insignificance which comes upon one is absolutely overwhelming. One cannot be, do, or suffer, without continually thinking what a paltry, little mite of existence one is. But live in the place. Eat, drink, and sleep in it. Get used to it. In a while the morbid feeling fades away. One begins to feel one is almost an average mortal—one feels one is quite an average mortal—one feels one is rather more than an average mortal—one feels one is considerably superior to the ordinary run of mankind—one feels, in fact, more self-satisfied than ever one did; for, whereas one only felt before that one was a local genius, one now feels that one is a metropolitan genius. A sensation of pride at being familiar with what one once stood in awe of, and what one's friends still stand in awe of, supersedes. In fact one becomes, in course of time, a priggish, bloated, insufferable Cockney; and it is the Cockney contempt for what is provincial, and the corresponding provincial respect for what is Cockney, which is the mockery, the delusion, and the snare.

The Cockney depreciates the provinces simply out of self-conceit, because he thinks—with an acuteness which is a fair sample of his intelligence—that having been born in the greater place, he is, therefore, the greater man. The provinces respect the Cockney simply out of ignorance, because they see him "through a glass" a—magnifying glass. It is all a farce—this respect and this contempt. Of course, in all things, tip-top talent generally finds its way to London; and so far as tip-top talent is concerned, London is, accordingly, superior to every other place. But tip-top talent is an exceptional thing. What we would emphasize is, that metropolitan mediocrity is no better than provincial mediocrity. People firmly believe it is. People respect and admire men and things simply because they are metropolitan. It is an utter mistake. What creates remark and approbation in a provincial town of any importance, would create the same in London. It is ignorance to suppose it is so clever and superior. In the case of our own town, the balance turns in our favour. We have better taste. Setting aside supreme ability, in every department of life which we have in common, we are equal to the metropolis. In local men, in local management, in literature, in the industries, and in the professions, Manchester is as good as London any day of the week—and better on Sundays. We assert, in all seriousness, that the belief in the superiority of the metropolis, both in men and things, widely spread, and devoutly held, and acted upon though it be, is a delusion.

This commonplaceness of the metropolis is the first feature that strikes us. The second is its affliction with the plague of fashion. It would be hard, indeed, to find a place where the supreme goddess had not a shrine. But London is her head-quarters. She has images everywhere, but the idol herself is erected there. It is there that her painted face grins beneath her false hair. It is not at the West-end alone that she is worshipped. Eaton Place and Belgrave Square are her birthright, and she has a claim to be there. But her religion permeates downwards. In the lowest depths to which she descends, the worship of her displays itself chiefly in timid loyalty. The amount of morbid allegiance to royalty resident in streets and courts in London is perfectly unknown in provincial towns. The quantity of fulsome small-talk that goes on about "the Prince"—in default of there being a Queen to talk about—is most offensive to provincial taste. Loyalty is all very well, but this morbid garrulity arises, not from the fact that he is the prince of England, but from the fact that he is the prince of fashion. This is not wholesome loyalty, but pernicious cant. Still, it is natural. Royalty lives in London, so it is not to be wondered at that London lives in royalty. The class of which we have been speaking knows no better; but the class above it does—or ought to do—and it is just as bad. The quantity of fashionable rubbish that is talked—of driving in the Park to be seen, of going to the opera that is not appreciated, of being chaperoned to dances that are not enjoyed, of putting on dress-coats and low dresses for dinners that are not relished, of attending assemblies that are a bore, of paying calls that are mere forms, of travelling miles to leave cards that are tossed into a card-basket, of smiling heartless smiles, of paying of hollow compliments, of bowing of frigid bows, and of touching of stolid hands, which is perpetrated in that London every day—is enough to make one wish one "was a Cassowary," even engaged on a meal of cold missionary and hymn book. There is, at least, some heartiness in cannibalism.

From this horrible, heartless fashion, one actually turns with what feels almost like relief to that general immorality which is the third distinctive characteristic of London. We question whether it is any good to use a despondent tone. The world laughs, and does not believe. But really it is difficult to do otherwise when one looks around at the state of things. It is a shady prospect for the next generation. Times historically flagitious may have been worse in the outward manifestations of inward corruption, but it requires an effort to believe that they were really much worse than the time which is just coming. Between secret and open immorality the apparent difference is far greater than the real one. At present a scrutiny at home is not satisfactory; but London is advanced a stage further in disease, and symptoms are just beginning to be apparent on the surface. When one looks below, the sight is indeed horrible. It always had the reputation of being a big, wicked place; and really it deserves its fame. The air is impregnated with immorality. We do not mean actual, tangible vice, but lack of principle. The atmosphere is relaxing to the moral system. Nobody believes in honour; everybody might be tumbled over into sin with a feather. And the amount of actual vice which is already existent is a dreadful sum-total. The professionally vicious are an enormous class; but then they always were; and besides, it is their profession, after all, and does not startle one so much. But when one finds the professionally virtuous pretty nearly as bad as the professionally vicious, one cannot help feeling a little confounded. Manchester never talks of what London talks about. Manchester never hears what is on the tip of London's tongue. Manchester knows comparatively nothing of England's great men; London knows a good deal about them—at least, about the men whom Manchester thinks great. London knows enough about almost every great man to turn him into a very small man, indeed. The provinces are comparatively innocent. They may be prepared to believe that the aristocracy is rotten to the core; but they are not prepared to believe that the great commoners who guide and govern them, who sit in the high places of the land, who are clothed in purple and fine linen, whose names read so well in the newspapers, and whom they are so proud to get to patronise the local bazaar or preside at the local meeting, are no better than the aristocracy—white hypocrites, whose "noble sentiments" are chessmen, whose righteous indignation is a performance, and whose alleged "principles" are their stock-in-trade. In all places vice is prevalent, but in high places it is rampant. We have no great opinion of the world's morality; but we do believe that if it only knew what sort of men its rulers were, it would trample them under its feet to-morrow. Still, men were always bad, and yet the world has wagged. One can look on bad men with simple contempt. It is when women begin to falter that the outlook is grievous. To paint may seem a trifle. If it were confined to a few fashionable ladies, it would be a trifle; but when, walking about the London streets—fashionable or unfashionable—St. James's or St. Giles's—one sees almost every girl who has the least pretension to good looks (except an occasional actress) plastered with pigments, the matter becomes serious. The provinces do not believe that this is so. They think it is an invention of the *Saturday Review*. Willing to believe that a few fast females daub themselves after the manner of savages, they condemn the sweeping assertions of modern satirists, who would include all women in the barbarous category. The ladies feebly mutter commonplaces about "good complexions," and "want of charity," and "fine heads of hair." As though paint ever yet resembled natural colour, and as though back-hair was usually of so different a shade to front that the two tints are divided by a hard and fast line! As for hair, one may see at the play and opera dozens of creatures who flaunt monstrous piles of parti-coloured stuff, with the most brazen impudence. There they sit and gibber, with one-coloured hair in front, and another behind—the one ending, and the other beginning, at a mathematical straight line. They know that every beholder in the house could not only swear the pile is false,

but point out the precise place where the lie is hair-pinned on. As for paint, there are streets in London, full of women, where you can no more see a woman's face than in the Great Sahara. When painting is thus popular, it is a symptom. Others are not wanting. Besides outrages in costume, the loose character of entertainments, the cool manner in which vices are taken for granted, the impudent manner in which sin is not only received in society but preferred to virtue, the style of conversation, the growing boldness of what once was shame, the profligacy of those who are in any way able and distinguished—above all, the conduct of women, and the fact that they have entirely lost the respect and deference of men—all these things are dark forebodings.

From darker and sadder phases of London immorality we may not lift the veil. And, as for moral, we leave parents and guardians who have been wont to regard the metropolis as an admirable educational institution, to draw it for themselves.

A CHAPTER OF AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

BY A BILIOUS BACHELOR.

Man delights not me, nor woman neither.—*Hamlet.*

MR. GLADSTONE has written his chapter of autobiography, and why should not I? Naturally, I believe I am not radically bad or bloodthirsty; indeed, partial friends have, at times, pronounced me "a brick;" but when a man is suffering from ill treatment, dyspepsia, and an over secretion of bile, his failings are not likely to lean to virtue's side. From the quotation at the head of this chapter, I judge that the Prince of Denmark was, like myself, a hypochondriac, a misanthrope, and a misogynist. I am a victim to neglect, and am undergoing the consequences of a course of Christmas stuffing and cramming. Hamlet's wrongs are notorious. That it was not Christmas at Elsinore, we learn from a few words spoken by Marcellus, when, referring to the appearance of the Ghost, he says that at that season "No spirit dares stir abroad, so hallowed and so gracious is the time." Nevertheless, I am inclined to think that Hamlet's liver was disordered, and that he, too, had been indulging. He alludes to the carousals which were going on "as heavy-headed revels," speaking of them as every-day occurrences; and, during his fatal fencing bout with Laertes, his mother declares that her son "is fat and scant of breath." *I* have no wrongs communicated to me by sepulchral and supernatural ghosts. Mine are of the earth, earthy; I am a disappointed politician. A fortnight since, when the new Ministry was in a state of incubation, I remained within doors for six entire days, waiting for Mr. Gladstone's telegram, which never arrived. Why Mr. Milner Gibson and myself should have been left out, and Hartington provided for, is a mystery which I cannot make out. True, we have no seats, but neither has the Marquis; and I have one in the Parish Church, which is more than *he* has; and I have reason to know that, had Bullocksmithy been enfranchised, I should have been elected. Even Mr. Stansfeld's post—the very last joint in the Government tail—would have been better than nothing. Indeed, it would just have suited me, as its duties, as described by Mr. Stansfeld, are to give "consecutive thought to the policy of finance;" and, although, like the man's taciturn parrot, I am no talker, still I am "a beggar to think." These are my political grievances, which will have to be accounted for, and, for the explanation, I say, with Jaques, the Chancellor of the Exchequer—

I'll stay to know at your abandon'd CAVE.

In addition to the abominable treatment which I have received from the ministry, I am suffering from a surfeit of Christmas gormandising, and most particularly from a course of turkey, in many shapes. Turkey, with its appendages, is my detestation, and why it should have superseded the time-honoured goose I am at a loss to know. Formerly it used to be a stubble goose at Michaelmas and a goose at Christmas, with turkey thrown in. Now it is turkey, turkey, turkey, until I am as much overdone with it as Jack Falstaff was with Ford, and feel inclined to express myself in the coarse language adopted by that amusing sensualist. For eight consecutive days have I dined out, and the odious bird has been the staple dish at every table. Likes and dislikes between individuals are generally mutual, and, by some mysterious agency, the hatred which I bear to the dead fowl is reciprocated by the living bird. I have frequently to pass a farm yard where there is a flock of turkeys. The instant I appear "Jock" sets up his tail, ruffles his feathers, commences gobbling, and, sticking out his chest, he struts and frets about the yard like a tragedian playing to the gods. Two days since I went to settle a small matter of business with Mrs. Muirhead, and was recommended to buy a turkey. "Turkey me no turkeys," I began with, in a rage, but it was of no avail; there was no resisting the blandishments of that most industrious and estimable lady, so I sneaked out of the shop with the turkey wrapped up in brown paper, making believe that it was a parcel of Mudie's books. I had not gone ten yards before I met old Hopkins, who, with a grin on his face, remarked, "Ah! been getting your turkey I see." Getting indeed! I was so disgusted that I could have thrown Hopkins, turkey and all, over the railings into the Irwell, but there were so many cabmen and people about that I had no chance, so I gave it to a widow with a large family who lives near me. "Thank heaven," said I, "that is done with. To-morrow to fresh fields and pastures new." It was ordered otherwise. Following the custom of my countrymen, and wishing to qualify myself as a representative man, with Bullocksmithy in the distance, I put several coins, impressed with the image of Her Majesty, into various raffles for Christmas cheer, consisting of pheasants, geese, fowls, hares, bottles containing sundry decoctions, one shoulder of mutton, and an entire pig weighing heaven knows how many score, and of course I—lost; not at all, I won a confounded turkey. Incensed, I put it up again at half its value, and the accursed biped a second time fell to my lot. What ultimately became of it I know not; perhaps its legs in a devilled state I may have consumed since. All that I know is that I feel like Prometheus chained to the rock of Caucasus, with a great turkey cock instead of a vulture tearing and gnawing at my vitals.

At this season of the year the butcher's shops are quite too much for me. Some folks can stand inspecting the carcases of slaughtered beasts until their mouths water at the ghastly sight, like Trollope's commercial traveller, Moulder, who bought his Christmas dinner a fortnight previous and gloated over it as it hung every day meanwhile. I would nearly as soon regale myself upon the gory locks of the blood bolter'd Banquo. A new style of art has arisen among the butchers. A sucking pig with an apple in its mouth is just endurable, although it is unpleasantly like a baby, but rows of slaughtered animals—some of them with headless carcases, some cut into quarters, and others with their heads and tails left on as in life, their flayed and dressed bodies with patterns traced on their ribs, put together again in various attitudes giving a hideous imitation of life—are to me a ghastly spectacle. In walking to town last week I passed such innumerable rows of slaughtered bullocks, heifers, sheep, and pigs in all combinations of forms, that the feelings of early youth returned, and I fancied that I saw Bluebeard's wives suspended by the hair of their heads in the forbidden chamber, and the body of Cassim Baba, cut into quarters, hanging in the robbers' cave, and stitched together again by Mustapha, the cobbler.

Under ordinary circumstances, and in moderation, Christmas festivities are enjoyable enough; but now everything is overdone, and when the weather is soaking wet, and the day falls on a Friday, making three consecutive days given up to feasting, intermittent snoozing, and night-

mare, it becomes a serious matter. You can't take up a periodical or newspaper that is not crammed full of Christmas matter; churches and domestic dwellings are over-decorated with holly and misletoe; if you enter an hotel, the chances are that you are pounced upon by some kitchen-maid, who nearly garrottes you, and, after kissing you, expects a *douceur* in return. Aroint thee, wench! I like it not. On Christmas eve I could not sleep a wink, and several times, when just in the act of dropping off, stentorian voices beneath my window called upon me to "hawake—saleut the 'appy morn." Then all my young nieces and nephews called to wish me the compliments of the season—of course without the least reference to the presents which they annually expect from me. I took them all to the pantomime one n'ght. They seemed to enjoy it well enough; I didn't. It is like every other pantomime—glaring with light and horribly noisy. The chief features of modern pantomimes seem to me to be glittering transformation scenes and women's legs. Bah! What is there in vistas of female legs, nine-tenths of which are padded spindle shanks? I am heathen enough to think the harlequinade the best part of a pantomime. I like the fun of the Clown and Pantaloon, and admire the spangles of Harlequin and twinkling feet of Columbine. My old enemy, the turkey, turned up during the performance, and got roughly handled in a row with a policeman.

THE MANCHESTER POST-OFFICE.

A fortnight since we complained of the letter carriers being allowed to look upon and ask for New Year's Gifts as a right. The Post-master of Manchester has given notice of a very arbitrary act. The fees for boxes in Brown-street are again to be raised another guinea. Considering that the boxes are already a saving and a source of revenue to the Post-office, we consider it a very harsh proceeding. We understand that the deliveries both in the town and suburbs are to be increased, which is an improvement, and possibly many parties who now have boxes may give them up. The Money Order Office is still open to improvement. Last week we had occasion to cash an order, and we were kept waiting exactly twenty-five minutes. At another time our messenger was detained three quarters of an hour. Nothing could be more simple than to send some additional clerks to the counter when it is crowded. The other clerks don't appear to be overwhelmed with work. As Mr. Ruskin would say, it is a waste of force. Sydney Smith used to assert that railway accidents would not be provided against until a few peers, bishops, and directors had been killed. It may be the same with the Post-office, and when Lord Hartington, the Duke of Montrose, Lord Stanley of Alderley, and other postmasters have to collect their own money orders (if they ever get any), perhaps we may have a change.

CRUMBS OF COMFORT.

BY A CRUSTY OLD BACHELOR.

BE cheerful on your wedding day—reprieves sometimes come at the last moment.

A lean husband leaves a fat widow.

A dutiful child is like a wooden leg—a great comfort under the circumstances.

A shrewish temper—like a patchet boot is sure to break out again—and *always* shows.

Better the annoyance of a piano through a party wall than your neighbour's wife for a mother-in-law. When the hen crows, the cock goes out for a holiday.

Solomon was a wise man and knew better than to be all one woman's husband.

To let your wife have the last word is to tempt her to worse mischief.

Judicious opposition creates the strongest connubial attachment.

A tipsy man's wife never thinks much of her husband's acquaintances.

When kissing commences at an evening party, you may "act a charade" and mizzle-too.

The frown of a flirt is about the silliest thing she permits herself to indulge in.

A single man may do a good deal in the way of sneaking off home before ceasing to get invitations out.

THE PANTOMIMES.

GOODY TWO-SHOES AT THE PRINCE'S.

[BY OUR RHYMING CHRONICLER.]

PROLOGUE.

To those who find that Christmas brings
A congeries of ills,
Whose Christmas carol's drear refrain
Is—bills; bills; bills;
We frankly say—these stanzas shun,
Too childish is their theme;
They are but meant for those whose cares
Weigh lighter than a dream;

Whose Christmas is a jubilee;
A round of joys and toys.
God bless 'em! What they do *not* know—
Those little girls and boys.
But stay—where are we drifting to?
'Twere wiser to depend
On precedent, and leave this kind
Of "goody" to the end.

So sing a song of nonsense,
A budget full of rhymes,
Half a score of stanzas
About the Pantomimes.
The Prince's is in Oxford Street,
Brilliant and funny;
The Royal is in Peter Street,
And amply worth the money;
The Queen's is in Spring Gardens,
As everybody knows,
And we'll "go in like a black" bird,
To hit off the shows.

GOODY TWO-SHOES.

In A B C sequence the Princes's stands first,
And by no means the worst;
For William Brough's the reverse of a muff
At this playfully-pleasant, extravagant stuff,
But writes you with care,
And his piece to a hair
Always fits with a moral as strong as 'twill bear

If we happened to say,
In an off-handed way,
We were scarcely *au fait* at discerning a play,
It would not be to speak as a chronicler should
(And, indeed, when one thinks of it,
Telling THE SPHINX of it,
Would not do a certain contributor good);
But—what with the demons, the imps, and the fairies,
The wonderful scenery,
Flood, field, and greenery,
And mountain and valley,
And what with the beauteous, bewildering ballet,
The music, the glitter, fun, frolic, and din—
We scarce need ask pardon for asking you where is
The puzzle we're puzzled how best to begin?

As a matter of course, in all "openings" you've got
The magical home
Of fairy or gnome;
And whether the spot
Be a cool, shady grot,
Or a dell,
Or a cell,
Or a place we *en passant* will simply term—hot,
In their chosen retreat
The "myrmidons" meet,
To kindly enlighten you as to the plot.

In the case under notice 'tis fairies you see,
All "out on the spree,"
And a pig-widgeon Williams, within an old tree,
Is fiddling away at an eldrich tune,
By the light of the moon,
Whilst a mushroom or toad-stool their table supplies;
And, to judge from its size,
It would not surprise
Us to find that the "spawn" it was grown from was got
From Edwin Waugh's "florist," whom, 'twixt us and you,
We are learning to view
In the light of a—kind of a—just so—why not?

In the course of the piece you discover that history,
In spite of embellishment, pageant, and mystery,
And the adding of jokes in galore, and broad fun to it,
Has had a fair measure of fair justice done to it.
And here don't suppose
We are banded with those
Who "pick out the bits" to "insert" in the papers:
By *gum*, we don't cut such piratical capers.
No! 'tis ours just to hint at the sights to be seen,
That those who are mean,
And intensely unwilling
To part with a shilling,
May read, and with envy turn purple or green,
Or ultra-marine,
Like a Pantomime scene,
And bite off their ten finger-ends with the spleen.

Scene Two we'll entitle the scene-shifters' friend.
In the form of a mist it appears to descend;
'Tis stupid—but kind,
Being chiefly designed
To enable the folks who are busy behind
To set "Goody's Cottage." This lady has views
Which are almost ambitious
Enough to be vicious,
In such a delicious
And dainty young damsel, and yet you excuse
The poor girl, for she gets into grief and new shoes
And a dreadful dilemma—then bitterly rues,
And—a prey to the blues,
Is abducted—when KINDHEART comes forward to sing
A ballad to bring
The scene to a close quite correct and genteely,
And the song that she sings is by some one named Bealey.

Scene Four is—Hi! what's this tumbling down?
For a crown
'Tis the waterworks—come to spend Christmas in town!
Or perhaps in disgrace
It is leaving its place?
Is it running away,
Or but "out for the day?"
Or—but this is too bad—
Is it WOODHEAD *gone mad*
And at large! We could furnish a reason.
Hydrophobia—that's it—from the recent dry season

Of course you have heard of the Falls of Lodore,
How the roar—
If you e'er read "Bob Southey"
(*Vide* Byron) and how the
Jolly big row they
Kick up is a singular thing in its way.
Well, we venture to say
This huge torrent of spray
Will impress you far more than the Laureate's lay;
For in many a sheet,
From the towering heights of an Alpine retreat,
The water comes headlong down close to your feet.

If friend Heron, some night when he's out on the sly,
This wonderful cataract happens to spy,
In some strain such as this he'll excitedly cry—
"You may lead me, a sacrifice meek, to the slaughter,
But torture me not with this wild waste of water;
It will break my poor heart." Then our Joseph will die,
Or worse than e'en this, he may—stop the supply.

The scenes which come next from the playbills appear
To be painted by Herberte—all humbug—LANDSEER!
At least Mr. Calvert half hinted as much,
And besides—we could swear to the masterly touch.
But hold—a thought strikes us—we grow too prolix,
And a fix
We shall find ourselves in if the editor kicks.
Yet the beautiful Palace of Coins, which comes next,
Leaves us sorely perplex't
To think we must pass at this dreadfully shabby rate
A scene so elab-by-rate.

On the grand Transformation 'tis simply absurd
To venture a word;
And with justice to speak
Of all that's worth mention would take up a week,
And would fill a whole SPHINX;
So suffice it to say
"'Tis as good as a play"
And "nods to blind horses being = to winks,"
What is not described must be kindly inferred.

L'ENVOI.

Well, of course as we live in an age with a rage
For *goody* in all matters, shallow or sage,
'Twould not do to depose
(With its manifold foes)
The doses deemed good for the good of the Stage.
And indeed—when prescribed in the form of Miss Cross
We are not at a loss
To pledge our acceptance without "if" or "but" in it,
And as to the moral we venture to draw,
'Tis contained in this saw—
When you take a strange step—mind you don't put your foot in it.

A SUGGESTION FOR CAPTAIN PALIN.

AGAIN insidious bits of orange peel abound upon our foot-paths. Again we are in danger of broken arms, or contused shoulders. Of little avail is all the care with which we see middle-aged philanthropists and elderly gentlemen painfully extruding this peccant substance into the gutter. We are persuaded that unless some systematic plan be adopted, the danger will continue to increase year by year, as do oranges themselves. We have then a suggestion to offer—not to the public, but to our *chef de police*, and as we do not often trouble him with advice, we trust that he will forthwith act upon it. Why should not his men, who seem generally to have little or nothing to do, be ordered strictly to remove every bit of peel from the foot-way? This would literally be appropriate to their vocation. For are they not Peelers?

MIND YOUR HEADS!

The persevering efforts of certain persons, unknown, to commit manslaughter, by erecting in various suburbs huge hoardings, that are invariably blown down in every gale of wind, are so remarkable as to deserve the public chronicling, which we hereby give them, and which, we hope, their authors will appreciate and profit by.

CONUNDRUM ON THE PATENT LEVER PRINCIPLE.—Why is a visitor in the neighbourhood of Charter-street likely to become a victim of impulse? Because it's very difficult to keep a watch upon oneself in that locality.

"MABEL GREY."

THAT we have always maintained the morality of this generation was immaculate, our regular readers will be first to acknowledge. We have consistently exposed the churlish conceit of those antiquated fogies who complain that this age is worse than the last, and publicly avow their belief that the rising generation is a falling one. Especially has it been our habit to remark the self sacrificing zeal with which the purveyors to the public refuse to pander to those few amiable weaknesses which that respectable body would be more than human if it did not occasionally indulge in. It is gratifying to be able to particularize the generality of our commendation by especial reference to the proprietors of one of the most respectable print-shops in Manchester.

Passing by it a few days ago, we were gratified to observe, placed in the most conspicuous part of the highly respectable window, no less than twenty photographs—in various positions, costumes and colours—of a certain highly respectable young lady, who appears with such regularity at a certain place of instructive recreation, situate in London—but well known to all the young gentlemen of Manchester—as to induce many persons to believe that she is part and parcel of the highly respectable establishment. To extol greatness and extend appreciation of the great, is the part of every good citizen. It is, therefore, a most honourable endeavour to attempt to familiarize men, and still more, women, with the features of those fair ladies who have "awoke one morning and found themselves"—infamous. It is peculiarly meritorious to exhibit twenty photographs of a girl, who, humbly commencing a career of public usefulness behind a draper's counter, subsequently imbued the stage with the refining influence of her pure presence; and then, with the suddenness of genius, achieved wealth, gorgeous raiment, and—a brougham. We are happy to see that the gentlemen to whom we have alluded are not the only ones who have paid this graceful tribute to genius. We know that there is hardly a respectable print shop in London or the provinces which has not honoured the likeness of George Peabody and Florence Nightingale with the company of this noble woman's. But those gentlemen have pre-eminently distinguished themselves by the enthusiasm with which they have done homage to this queen of half a world. The crowds of admiring ladies who daily congregate around these gorgeous photographs of an insipid girl, testify to the beneficial influence which they are exerting on mankind. Our print-sellers are disinterestedly attempting to bring virtue into fashion, and to cast vice into obscurity.

It may be as well to note how this sort of thing strikes a stranger. The portraits to be seen in Exchange-street, and doubtless in other Manchester streets, are flaunted before the public gaze with equal shamelessness in the shops of London; and this is what an American in England writes home to one of the New York journals:—

Everywhere one portrait now strikes the eye. It is that of a beautiful young girl, fair and modest to all appearance, and evidently occupying a high position. She is in half the albums one opens, and soon will be in the other half—so rapidly is she becoming the vogue. Underneath the portrait, you will find written the name of Mabel Grey. And who is Mabel Grey? Some young lady who has distinguished herself. Yes, truly—but not in the way that honest women could bear to think of. She holds a sort of official drawing-room every night at a casino in Holborn, and thither richly dressed women flock to pay her court, and envy her. You go to a theatre, and there in a private box, accompanied by men who keep in the background, is a young lady attired in a magnificent dress, and covered with diamonds. Her necklace might constitute a King's ransom—there are rings enough on her fingers to purchase a princely estate. The face is beautiful and intelligent. This is Mabel Grey, over whose portrait half England is going crazy. The thing takes, and now by the side of Mabel Grey there appears another face, scarcely less beautiful, and this is known as Marion Lee. As I go home through Kensington, it happens to me very frequently to meet a young person of faultless figure, though short in stature, riding from the park. Her groom follows on a perfect bit of horse-flesh. Then if I chance to take a stroll in the Burlington arcade in the afternoon, I see the same young person, dressed in velvet and Russian sables, and with one or two cavaliers by her side. She is not yet quite the rage of the town, but Marion Lee is on the high road to "splendid infamy." You will see her portrait side by side in every lady's album. Will any one say, then, that religion, morality, and social progress are not prospering more than ever in the midst of this vast and ever-growing city?

AMBROSIAL MANNERS.

THE following little interchange of amenities between the bench and the bar is so typical of the gentlemanly manner in which local learning is in the habit of treating local authority, that we transfer it from the columns of the daily press into our own.

THE BENCH: We find that black is white.

THE BAR: Do I understand the court to say that it actually decides against the view which has been advocated by the most able and eloquent counsel at the bar, whose ability and eloquence are only excelled by his good temper, and whose good temper is only excelled by his good manners?

THE BENCH: That the court does so decide is certain, but that you understand its decision—or, indeed, anything else—the court would be very sorry to guarantee. In spite of all the evidence being to the effect that black is black, we find that it is white.

THE BAR: You don't.

THE BENCH: We do.

THE BAR: How dare you tell me you do, when I tell you you don't? I know what little mind you have to be known better than you know it yourself, and I tell you you don't find anything of the sort.

THE BENCH: We do.

THE BAR: Then, you're a fool!

THE BENCH: We state that black is white.

THE BAR: Then you're a liar!

THE BENCH: Apologise—or we will bring the world to an end.

THE BAR: In the interests of justice I called you a fool, and you *are* a fool.

THE BENCH: Are you prepared to apologise for calling us a liar?

THE BAR: No.

THE BENCH: Leave the court!

THE BAR: I won't.

THE BENCH: Then let the world end!

(And the world did NOT *end.)*

THE LOCAL BOARD.

OUR readers must not suppose, from our title, that we are about to discourse on carpentry, or upon something that can be nailed up (though the latter might be a process not altogether unwelcome to the general public), or about the longitudinal slabs which went to make coffins before coffins became "sanitary," and fit for the reception of the healthy defunct. Of all these things we cannot treat here. We deal with the spiritual; our Board is an aggregation of spirit—of mind—of knowledge; and its only connection with carpentry is by means of its rules, commonly called by-laws. Now, how to get a Local Board into the world, this—if men only considered it by means of the Eternal Silence—would be a jolly poser. For our Local Board is not a myth or phantasm, neither is it a nostrum or a dumpy leveller. Our Local Board was got into the world by laborious up-bearings of the outer crust of society, by the agency of voting papers, and by the depreciation of Chouser as against Flouser—by Twinter as against Squinter—and by a dashing poem by Waxer, in a highly sarcastic view, to show that Raxer was an impostor by birth and education, neither of which—especially the former—had been neglected. We ourselves got a voting paper, closely pursued by the poem aforesaid, to take the taste out of our mouth, like liquorice; and we were so perplexed and exercised on the subjects therein treated, that we went down to the "Wrangling Waggoner," which is our nearest public-house, and a great blessing to the neighbourhood for up-and-down fights, as soon as the evening shades prevail, where we stood glasses for ourselves, and consulted the company from the rear of a slow and confusing tobacco-pipe. We found that, on the question of this Local Board, there was a spirit abroad that could not be trifled with (by spirit, we don't mean excisable liquor); there was a deep and burning spirit—internal, not intestinal—amongst the inhabitants, which was bringing on a local *delirium tremens* and general palsy of public opinion, which we felt we could not witness

without a thrill of joy at the thought of the blessing this Local Board was to the neighbourhood.

We are residents of a suburb of the city of Micawber, a city so-called after the thriving colonist who first founded it, after having realized in his native country a large fortune from commissions in the coal and cannel trade. This suburb is named Old Thomas. The name is curious, but it is very ancient; and we may say, for the benefit of gentlemen having a preference for London gin, that it is not to be confounded with Old Tom. The suburb of Old Thomas is adjoining the park of a gentleman who lived the life of an anchorite, and had only one leading antipathy, which was—we put it shortly—cats. These he could not abide; he long lived the pride of that country-side, and at length, in the odour of sanctity, died. In the middle of his park he built a gaol for cats, where they were imprisoned, and by some was called, in consequence, the Prison Humourist. He felt a pleasure in going into the cells of these cats—his trousers and jacket, his hat and paletot, all stuffed with dead robins, which, the cats smelling, caused them to send up towards the Empyrean a most infernal catterwawling, that rose, as if in a solid basaltic column, like a Giant's Causeway of sound. We thus perceive that Old Thomas was an exceedingly eccentric personage, and that they only judged rightly who called him the Prison Humourist.

From this eminent man the suburb we now write of, and in which we are rateable to the Local Board, confoundedly takes its name. The suburb of Old Thomas is situated on an elevated plateau, and there run at its base two of the foulest streams in the wide, wide world. The one is called the Gastarry and the other the Pigstuffy. They never both stink at once, but generously take it in turns. Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays the Pigstuffy walks into our houses; Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays we are indebted to the Gastarry for a stench which wires in at the nose and out again at the back of your head—like nasty electricity. On Sundays there has been no understanding come to, and on that day, being a holiday, both these rivers stink like brethren in unity. Notwithstanding you will all gather from this description of our's that Old Thomas—as Dr. Johnson said of Scotland—must be a very delightful country, sir, to live *out* of, we have, nevertheless, plenty of good houses in its vicinity, inhabited by merchants, artists, bankers, shopkeepers, lawyers, playactors, magistrates (no connection between the two), but not any clergymen. The moment a clergyman enters this community, the Bishop—who hates disagreeable savours—kicks him out again. The Bishop deals him a kick which, if the clergyman were standing on his head, would be called a nose-ender, saying in a loud voice, "This from your beloved diocesan." The clergy are a long-suffering body, and we are afraid that very often in these days they get more kicks than half-pence; but when—as a regular thing—they receive the kicks without the mint or the cummin, as they have done generally at Old Thomas, no wonder they fight shy of that odorous locality. It is rumoured that, in default of any other place of worship, the Mormons are going to settle down quietly on the hill-side, on the principle that, in a multitude of women, there is wisdom. But they must not be old women, for, in ecclesiastical matters, the ground is already well occupied. It is said—perhaps in joke—by many of the regular clergy, that if a Mormon were to ask for a license to libidinize in our suburb, he might have more success with the Bishop than a young Oxford clergyman. If we, as a lay preacher, could hold forth in the church at Old Thomas, we should ask the attendance of the prelate who licensed us, and address the congregation from the text, "Now Barabbas was a robber," and, as the ladies say of a kiss, that sermon would consist only of two heads and an application.

* * * * * * *

Now the mayor, or town-clerk, or Mr. Rowbottom, or one of our councillors, when reading THE SPHINX—shall we say? (we fear it is so), out of the pockets of the ratepayers—will say in a chorus, "What on earth has all this to do with the Local Board?" To which, having consulted Mr. Lynde, who has accurate measurements of all his brother functionaries in his private memorandum book, we reply, "Mr. Mayor and gentlemen,—when a rate is struck it need not be levied all at once; wait and you shall have another instalment of 'The Local Board.' Wait, and above all things, learn to labour as well as wait. You are an interesting group; be, if you like, Christmas Waits—but avoid the wassail bowl. We propose to make 'The Local Board' a literary plank to carry you forward with the New Year, and may it be a happy one to all of us, including the police, who at this festive season appear to us to 'receive' rather heavily about the head from the Irish!

A LONELY CHRISTMAS.

I.

Is this the end of it?
Is this the end of blushing and sweet sighing,
Of whispers, pleasuring her more than wit
Pleasureth ears of men? Is Time denying
The song which, like the lark, he sang as he was flying!

II.

This is the end of it,
That, when Time's wings should Christmas kindness waft her,
She in this little lonely room doth sit,
With sad, fire-watching eyes, while roof and rafter
Elsewhere hang, holly-wreath'd, o'er genial Christian laughter.

III.

This is the end of it,
Of star that shines, of flower that uncloses,
Of nightingale whose tawny wings alit
Quiver with passionate long stress, while flows his
Song, and the lingering eve is sweet and red as roses.

IV.

This is the end of it:
No more she and her sisters range the clovers,
No more for her the merry swallows flit
About that once-glad manor house. Death covers
The time, the golden time—the time of friends and lovers.

V.

This is the end of it:
Silence for voices, sighing for glad singing,
And flowers forgot, except when to the pit
Of dark and narrow Death she wends, them bringing
To graves of those whose mirth once with her own was ringing.

VI.

This is the end of it:
Her guests are ghosts, and, as the night advances,
Nought else her solitude doth intermit;
Nought has she of old Yules but memory's fancies,
And firelight on the walls which, unlike her, still dances.

VII.

This is the end of it:
Fortune hath made her lone, and hath asunder
Torn the sweet ravel which the years did knit;
Fortune, who gives to most amends for plunder,
Altho' she is to few a summer without thunder.

VIII.

This the end of it,
Of joy; but, promising an end of sorrow,
The Lord of Christmas bids men to refit
Their shipwreck'd hopes, till the last moon shall borrow
Light, and the last night end, and morning have no morrow.

THE OWL AND THE CAT.

[FROM "THE CAT'S PILGRIMAGE," BY J. A. FROUDE].

IT was in the middle of the wood. The bush was very dark, but she found him by his wonderful eye. Presently, as she got used to the light, she distinguished a sloping roll of feathers, a rounded breast, surmounted by a round head, set close to the body, without an inch of a neck intervening. "How wise he looks!" she said. "What a brain! what a forehead! His head is not long, but what an expanse! and what a depth of earnestness!" The owl sloped his head a little on one side; the cat slanted hers upon the other. The owl set his straight again; the cat did the same. They stood looking in this way for some minutes; at last, in a whispering voice, the owl said, 'What are you who presume to look into my repose? Pass on upon your way, and carry elsewhere those prying eyes."

"Oh, wonderful owl!" said the cat, "you are wise, and I want to be wise; and I am come to you to teach me."

A film floated backwards and forwards over the owl's eyes; it was his way of showing that he was pleased.

"I have heard in our schoolroom," went on the cat, "that you sate on the shoulder of Pallas, and she told you all about it."

"And what would you know, oh, my daughter?" said the owl.

"Everything," said the cat — "everything. First of all, how to be happy."

"Mice content you not, my child, even as they content not me," said the owl. "It is good."

"Mice, indeed!" said the cat. "No; parlour cats don't eat mice. I have better than mice, and no trouble to get it; but I want something more."

"The body's meat is provided; you would now fill your soul."

"I want to improve," said the cat. "I want something to do. I want to find out what the creatures call my duty."

"You would learn how to employ those happy hours of your leisure—rather how to make them happy by a worthy use. Meditate, oh, cat! meditate! meditate!"

"That is the very thing," said she. "Meditate! That is what I like above all things; only I want to know how. I want something to meditate about. Tell me, owl, and I will bless you every hour of the day, as I sit by the parlour fire."

"I will tell you," answered the owl, "what I have been thinking of ever since the moon changed. You shall take it home with you, and think about it, too; and the next full moon you shall come again to me: we will compare our conclusions."

"Delightful! delightful! said the cat. "What is it? I will try this minute."

"From the beginning," replied the owl, "our race have been considering which first existed—the owl or the egg. The owl comes from the egg, but likewise the egg from the owl."

"Mercy!" said the cat.

"From sunrise to sunset I ponder on it, oh cat! When I reflect on the beauty of the complete owl, I think that must have been the first, as the cause is greater than the effect. When I remember my own childhood, I incline the other way."

"Well, but how are we to find out?" said the cat.

"Find out!" said the owl, "we can never find out. The beauty of the question is, that its solution is impossible. What would become of all our delightful reasonings, oh, unwise cat! if we were so unhappy as to know?"

"But what in the world is the good of thinking about it, if you can't, oh owl?"

"My child, that is a foolish question. It is good, in order that the thoughts on these things may stimulate wonder. It is in wonder that the owl is great."

"Then you don't know anything at all," said the cat. "What did you sit on Pallas's shoulder for? You must have gone to sleep."

"Your tone is over flippant, cat, for philosophy. The highest of all knowledge is to know that we know nothing."

The cat made two great arches with her back and her tail.

"Bless the mother that laid you," said she. "You were dropped by mistake in a goose nest. You won't do. I don't know much, but I am not such a creature as you, anyhow. A great white thing!"

THE BLIND ASYLUM CHAPEL.

[TO THE EDITOR OF THE SPHINX.]

SIR,—I read with much pleasure the article in your last number on the Old Trafford Blind Asylum Chapel. I was glad to see justice done in your sketch to the memory of the late Rev. Mr. Buckley. The outer world, who know little of the history of this Institution, is apt to condemn him; but those who had the privilege of his acquaintance knew him only as a high-minded, Christian gentleman, whose heart was open to the voice of sorrow, and who, in his generosity and true liberality, did not let the left hand know what the right hand did. With regard to the chapel. You are quite right as to the expensive character of the pews. With a view to aid the then clergyman, the congregation, some years ago, voluntarily taxed themselves to the tune of 4s. a sitting, in order to pay the choir (a voluntary gift), and for the cleansing, &c., of the church. This has ever since been paid without much murmuring, for, although heavy, the congregation felt they had it in their power to stop the supplies, or control its disbursement. The church has now undergone quite a new phase, and yet the present rulers, in their bills just published for the past half-year's pew-rent, very modestly insert the *rate* as part of the debt. Can anything be more absurd than to demand rates from a congregation whilst denying to that congregation all right to interfere with its expenditure? If the pew-rents are not high enough in the opinion of the committee, let them, by all means, be raised, but let them expunge from their bills this voluntary rate. I maintain that it is absurd, and contrary to the general order of things, to ask for this rate. It formed no part of the original income of the church, but was substituted for a yearly voluntary collection. Now the chapel is in the hands of a committee, the congregation is without a pastor, the ordinary pew-rents are amply sufficient not only to pay the Institution's chaplain, but the choir and other incidental expenses, and still leave a surplus. Then why are we, irresponsible and helpless outsiders, to be thus taxed at the caprice of a committee? Can you say a word to help the apparently helpless congregation?—Yours, S. L.

Manchester, 28th Dec.

Dr. Arnold once lost all patience with a dull scholar, when the pupil looked up in his face and said, "Why do you speak so angrily, sir? Indeed, I am doing the best I can." Years after the doctor used to tell the story to his children, and say, "I never felt so ashamed in my life. That look and that speech I have never forgotten."

BLACKBURN'S MAYOR.

AT the annual dinner of the Blackburn Licensed Victuallers' Association, the borough members were present, but the mayor presided and gave the finest zest to the evening. "It would be impossible," says the *Preston Herald*, "to do justice to the vigour and energy of our thoroughly Lancashire mayor's utterances on this occasion by any translation of ours. We therefore give them in their native brusqueness, only regretting that words reproduce so inadequately the inimitable tone and manner of the worshipful speaker." And certainly the speeches are very funny. Toasting the Army and Navy, his worship said:—

Th' next toost is "th' army, th'navy, and t'volunteyers." Nah, at present time, theyr'sa greyt cry about th' army and't navy. Id might be th' opinion o' some peyple in this kuntry 'ut we con do without taxus, as sum peyple preych up, but weh con't do without both th' army and th' navy, and theyse lads want summat to eyt and drink. Theyre's two sorts ov heconomi for this kuntry, theyre's uh foolish heconomi and theyre's a wise un. There's such a thing as lettin' a lot o' things goin to roch for yers, and then havin' em all to fotch up agean. Trew heconomi is t' be reddy fer war at ony minnit. If, in 'Merika, or onywere else, they've getten a ten-punder, let's be able to send a twelve at 'em. But at same time we wunt men at head o'th' army and navy as 'el say a word and it's dun when they've sed it. Wer obleged to keep t' army and t' navy in that way, with gradely macheenury und pawer to make 'em felt, und awl this costs summat. We hev a third, and that is t' rifle corps, und I believe as if they're called upon they'll be reddy t' feyt for this kuntri, und I hev gret plesure in giving t' toast.

When the Mayor came to the next toast, he observed—

I see in t' next toast on t' pregram ah shel wunt to mak a little alterashun. It's "The Lord Bishop and clergy of the diocese." Ah wunt to had th' ministurs of all religuns to this, as ah should not perpows this toast as it stands for ony society. I don't believe i lettin one class o' parsons hev it o' to therselves. Ah hev great pleasur in movin thet Lord Bishop and clergy and the ministurs o' hawl denominashuns —an hawl o' 'em together, preysts an awl.

After this little oration, "By Celia's Arbour" was sung; and then his worship had another opportunity, in "returning thanks" for the magistrates and corporation. In this speech his worship showed himself to be a practical man. He said—

We wur still-born in Blegburn twenty yer ago; we wer without money, we hed now legacies left us, an yet we'd all t' sewerage o' this town to dew, an it's well known that t' working clesses of this kuntry cannot hev good helth iv there issn't good sewerage. Two yer sin Halderman Stones an me went to Croydon, and t' sewerage of that borough cost them 2s. in the pound on th' rates, and now they've a hincom off it. They've taken land, they've hirrigated it, and mak ther muck hinto munney. Has to our streets, it's well known by anybody who walks through Blegburn—an God forbid we should ever have another famin—bud it wor a blessin in a sannitarry point of view. We got 130,000 pund from t' Poor Law Board, and without that famin we should not hev hed these paved streets, thow God forbid we should hev it again. We hev spent of that something like £120,000 in our streets. Taking Blegburn

streets for 21 yers, we hev spent now less then 375,000 pund—and ov that we owe about £220,000. Nah, let me tell you whad, we mun hev money, and this is nowt upon Blegburn to good streets. We've now gret landed property like Liverpool, Manchester, Preston, and other cities, wher they've property, but we stand equal to them in rates to-day. We hev hed now fayther before us, nor muther nauther. I say, as a corporate body, we hev every one tried to do their best, and I may say this ther is not a corporation with better practical men then Blegburn hes to-day or hes had fur seven or ten yer—men who thurroly hunderstand hit, every one in ther hown spear as a hincorperated boddy.

As the evening advanced, the worthy mayor became more genial, without any loss of shrewdness. With three times three his health was drunk; upon which he rose and said—

Mr. Feilden, I thenk you for the hansome manner in which you hev proposed my toast, not only just as Mr. Feilden, but as Lord of the Manor of this town. I think it a honour of itself to have a member of Parliament and the Lord of the Manor to propose a toast to a poor man like me. And I thank you, gentlemen, for the invitation to-night; an' he is a poor mon who cannot enjoy hissel when he's among lads as he were browt up wi.' Wherever I go, I like to enjoy mysel, because I go among gradely lads. I don't know as ever I spent a ansomer evening than to-neet. I'm not one as hes a klassikel heddikashun. I'm like this man (Mr. Cocker). I've been born i' Blegburn—bud I believe that deeds an' akshuns speyks better than heddicashun. And I wor glad when Alderman Thompson named abowt th' working classes of this town. And tho' I know it is not a political meeting, I can say as there's as good hearts beneath fustian as under black cloth—I say all credit to this borough. And I hope as th' working classes will think for thersels, and not be gulled with chaff. I 'ope that the working classes will think of the men of 1862 and 1863, who didn't fill their bellies with chaff, but bread and cheese. You wouldn't find these men agitating then, because men and women and children wanted something i' ther belly. You do find Lord Derby going to Manchester, and giving his four or five thousand to th' hungry p ar. Though, as Mayor, I am not in a political meeting, but I do say to every working man i' Blegburn, "Think of 1862-3-4." and show who filled ther belly. And I think they will not forget it. Think of the men who did their best for ye, not by going about trying to agitate, like Bright, but keeping out of the way of the relief meetings, where they wanted some brass.

From all which it appears that if Blackburn's Mayor is not a man of high cultivation, he has qualities which explain and, perhaps, justify his rise to his present august position.

TO READERS AND CORRESPONDENTS.

In consequence of the unexpectedly large demand for the *Sphinx* of last week, the number for December 26th is practically out of print, only a few copies (less than a score) remaining on hand. Early application should be made by those who desire to complete sets.

Communications for the Editor should be addressed to the *Sphinx* Office, 14, Market Place, Manchester. Every manuscript should bear the name and address of the sender. All contributions are attentively considered, and unaccepted MSS. are returned on receipt of stamps for postage. No replies or MSS. can be delivered on personal application.

Business communications and advertisements should be addressed to THE MANAGER, 14, Market-place, Manchester.

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Consultations free, from 10 till 8.

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"Yᵉ MANCHESTER PYPE."

Communicated by the Ghost of Sir Walter Raleigh.

A sceptredde Kynge, who wore ye British crowne,
When bells and cap righte better hadde him suitedde,
Tryed hard to put man's sweetest solace doune—
Among some other notions wylde he mootedde,
As wychcrafte-deeminge ague and rheumatick,
And treatinge them untoe ye cure aquatick,
Which failynge—as yt sometymes didde somehowe—
He'd supplemente with faggotte, fire, and towe.
Weak gizzardeddе! 'tis easie toe construe
Why 'gainst my baccy thy aversionne growe;
Toe be in fashionne thou ysmokinge tryed,
Which ynside out yturnedde thy ynside.—
Oh! had'st thou knowne ofte LAMB'S RENOWNED PYPES,
Thou had'st notte felt gymnasticks in thy trypes,
But puffedde in peace and growne a wiser Kynge,
To wytcheraíte uppe and—everie other thynge.—
Syth, as it is, thye "Counter-blast" ing witte,
Ye moderne notions will in no wise fytte;
Soe fare ye weel, old regal cockolorum,
Jacobus Primus, Rex Brittaniorum!

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SHERIDAN MUSPRATT, M.D., F.R.S., &c."
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